

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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P R 170759Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6613

SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 14495

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, TH

SUBJ: SECRETARY CLEMENTS' DISCUSSION WITH THAI PRIME MINISTER

1. DEPUTY DEFENSE SECRETARY CLEMENTS SPENT AN HOUR AND A HALF SEPTEMBER 14 IN WIDE-RANGING, FRANK DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER THANOM ON MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. PRESENT ON THAI SIDE, IN ADDITION TO PRIME MINISTER, WERE AIR CHIEF MARSHAL DAWEE, DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHARTCHAI AND FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTETAKERS. U.S. SIDE INCLUDED AMBASSADOR UNGER, DEPUTY ASST SECY DOOLIN, DEPUTY ASST SECY BEECHER, AND BRIG GENL JONES FROM DEPUTY SECRETARY'S PARTY AS WELL AS DCM MASTERS AND MAJOR GENERAL MELLEN, COMUSMACTHAI.

THAI REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL MILITARY AID.

2. PRIME MINISTER LED OFF SUBSTANTIVE PORTION OF DISCUSSION BY REFERRING TO AUGUST 31 TALK BETWEEN AMBASSADOR ANAND AND DEPUTY ASST SECY DOOLIN IN WASHINGTON. REPORT HE HAD RECEIVED FROM HIS AMBASSADOR, THANOM SAID, INDICATED THAT BECAUSE OF CRA PROBLEM, THAILAND MAY "RECEIVE NOTHING" UNDER MAP FOR SOME MONTHS. STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING UP THAI DEFENSES WITHOUT PUTTING UNACCEPTABLE STRAIN ON THAI ECONOMY, THANOM ASKED THAT U.S. LEAVE BEHIND IN THAILAND WHATEVER MILITARY MATERIEL IT POSSIBLY COULD, AS HAD BEEN DONE IN VIETNAM. PRIME MINISTER ALSO REFERRED TO LIST OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAILAND NEEDED WHICH HAD BEEN PASSED TO GENERAL DUNN DURING
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VICE PRESIDENT'S FEBRUARY 1973 VISIT AND PASSED COPY TO DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS.

3. DEPUTY SECY SAID HE HAD SEEN THE LIST PASSED TO GENERAL

DUNN AND HAD STUDIED IT. AFTER SUMMARIZING PRESENT LEGISLATIVE SITUATION REGARDING FOREIGN AID, HE SAID THAT UNFORTUNATELY WE COULD NOT NOW DETERMINE WHAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO DO TO HELP THAILAND. HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO MAKE COMMITMENTS UNTIL THE CONGRESS ACTED. DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS ASSURED THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE ADMINISTRATION DESIRES A LARGER PROGRAM AND THAT IT IS DOING ITS BEST TO ACHIEVE THIS, BUT HE COULD NOT NOW SAY HOW SUCCESSFUL THESE EFFORTS WILL BE.

4. THE PRIME MINISTER INDICATED HIS AWARENESS OF THE "GRIM" PROSPECTS REGARDING MAP, BUT REFERRING TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S "DECISION TO STRENGTHEN THAILAND" AND COMMENTS DURING VISITS HERE BY FORMER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE LAIRD AND ADMIRAL MOORER, REITERATED REQUEST FOR MAXIMUM USE OF EXCESS DEFENSE ITEMS. PRIME MINISTER SAID HE REALIZED SITUATION IN THAILAND WAS DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN VIETNAM AND KOREA WHERE WE HAD LEFT LARGE AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT BEHIND, BUT PROBLEM FROM THAI STANDPOINT IS THAT WHILE U.S. IS OUT OF VIETNAM, U.S. FORCES ARE STILL HERE. PRIME MINISTER SAID HIS GOVERNMENT FACES DOMESTIC PRESSURES FROM STUDENTS AND OTHER ELEMENTS BECAUSE OF THIS PRESENCE AND IS ALSO TARGET FOR HOSTILE ACTS BY OTHER SIDE.

5. DEPUTY SECY SAID WE MAY BE ABLE TO LEAVE SOME EQUIPMENT BEHIND, BUT HE WAS IN NO POSITION TO MAKE COMMITMENT. WE COULD DO NOTHING CONTRARY TO CURRENT LAW. HE NOTED THAT AS DISCUSSIONS GO FORWARD REGARDING U.S. TROOP PRESENCE, WE WILL SEE IF WE CAN FIND A WAY TO HELP THAILAND. WE WILL DO THE BEST WE CAN, BUT DEPUTY SECY REITERATED IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO MAKE A COMMITMENT AT THIS TIME.

U.S. FORCES IN THAILAND

6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM DEPUTY SECY REGARDING FUTURE OF U.S. FORCES IN THAILAND, PRIME MINISTER SAID THAILAND HAS PUT NO DEADLINE ON U.S. PRESENCE. HE NOTED THAI HAVE DISCUSSED AMONG THEMSELVES OBJECTIVE OF REMOVING U.S. UNITS THAT ARE NOT SECRET

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BEING UTILIZED. WHEN REAL PEACE COMES TO THIS AREA, PROBLEM WILL SOLVE ITSELF AND U.S. TROOPS WILL NO LONGER BE REQUIRED. IT DEPENDS ON SITUATION AT THE TIME, PRIME MINISTER NOTED.

7. DEPUTY SECY EXPRESSED APPRECIATION THAT RTG WAS PLACING NO TIME FRAME ON FURTHER REDEPLOYMENTS FROM THAILAND, AS THIS WOULD AFFECT FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI AND OTHER DELICATE MATTERS. HE AGREED THAT ADDITIONAL U.S. FORCES SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN BUT IN A TIMELY MANNER AND WITH CAUTION.

THAILAND'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS.

8. AFTER EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR ASSISTANCE THAILAND HAS

PROVIDED TO COMMON EFFORTS IN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS, DEPUTY SECY ASKED FOR PRIME MINISTER'S VIEW OF RELATIONS WITH BURMA. PRIME MINISTER SKETCHED OUT HISTORY OF POOR RELATIONS FOLLOWING U NU'S RETURN TO POWER BUT NOTED THAT THINGS HAVE RECENTLY IMPROVED FOLLOWING VISITS OF CHARTCHAI TO RANGOON AND NE WIN TO BANGKOK. IN MOVE FURTHER TO IMPROVE RELATIONS, THAILAND RECENTLY REQUIRED U NU TO LEAVE AND MUCH APPRECIATES FACT THAT U.S. HAS TAKEN HIM IN. RTG ALSO RETURNED LO SHING-HAN TO GUB AS GESTURE OF COOPERATION. AS RESULT OF THIS BETTER ATMOSPHERE, MEETINGS OF JOINT BORDER COMMITTEE HAVE NOW BEEN RESUMED AND PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS ARE ENHANCED.

9. ASKED BY THE DEPUTY SECY FOR HIS VIEWS ON SITUATION IN CAMBODIA, THANOM STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CAMBODIA TO SECURITY OF THAILAND AND SOUTH VIETNAM. FOR THIS REASON, THANOM NOTED THAT RTG IS TRAINING CAMBODIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL WITH U.S. FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND, DESPITE ITS OWN SERIOUS RICE SITUATION, HAS AGREED TO MAKE RICE AVAILABLE TO GKR. AS RESULT OF THESE RICE SALES, PRICES HAVE RISEN IN THAILAND, BUT RTG REALIZES THAT LON NOL MUST HAVE RICE TO KEEP SUPPORT OF HIS PEOPLE.

10. PRIME MINISTER ALSO STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF U.S. CONTINUING ITS ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPORT FOR GKR. IF ENEMY BELIEVES YOU ARE CUTTING YOUR SUPPORT, HE SAID, OR IF THERE ARE SORTAGES, COMMUNISTS WILL MOVE IN FOR THE KILL. ASKED SPECIFICALLY REGARDING STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF LON NOL GOVERNMENT, THANOM SAID LON NOL, CHENG HENG, IN TAM AND SIRIK MATAK SEEM TO BE COOPERATING MORE CLOSELY IN RESPONSE TO
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STEPPED UP PRESSURE BY COMMUNISTS. MARSHAL DAWEE NOTED THAT ONE ELEMENT IN THIS INCREASED COOPERATION IS FACT THAT SIHANOUK HAS SAID HE WILL HANG ALL FOUR IF HE TAKES PHNOM PENH.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
----- 111352

P R 170759Z SEP 73
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6614
SECDEF WASHDC

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EXDIS

11. REGARDING LAOS, PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT

PROTOCOL HAD BEEN SIGNED PERMITTING FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. WE WILL BE HAPPY, HE SAID, IF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES WITHDRAW FROM LAOS, BUT HE EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN. COMMUNISTS, HE SAID, WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO ADVANCE THROUGH PROPAGANDA AND BY OTHER MEANS. THEY ARE EVEN NOW CAUSING TROUBLE FOR RTG BY SENDING INFILTRATORS INTO THAILAND ALONG LAO BORDER; HE MENTIONED SAYABOURY PROVINCE SPECIFICALLY. FURTHER CAUSE FOR CONCERN, THANOM SAID, IS ALL-WEATHER CHINESE ROAD IN NORTHERN LAOS WHICH EXTENDS TO MAKONG WITHIN 25 MILES OF THAI BORDER. THAI HAVE EVIDENCE THAT MANY TRUCKS ARE MOVING DOWN THIS ROAD, BUT SINCE TRUCKS ARE COVERED, THEY CANNOT BE CERTAIN WHAT IS BEING HAULED.

THAI RELATIONS WITH PRC.

12. ASKED BY DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS ABOUT THE STATE OF THAI RELATIONS WITH PEKING, THANOM OUTLINED VARIOUS VISITS BACK AND FORTH DURING PAST YEAR AND CONCLUDED THAT THAILAND MUST DEVELOP RELATIONSHIP WITH PEKING VERY CAREFULLY AND NOT "JUMP IN ALL AT ONCE." REGARDING TRADE, THANOM SAID GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT TRADE WOULD BE PERMITTED, BUT THAILAND MUST AVOID SITUATION IN WHICH PRC COULD GET HOLD OVER INDIVIDUAL THAI FIRMS. RTG WOULD ALSO HAVE TO CHECK CAREFULLY EVERYTHING ENTERING THAILAND AND HANDLING OF FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS TO BE SURE THAT FUNDS DO NOT GO TO CPT.

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13. THANOM THEN INQUIRED ABOUT US-PRC RELATIONS. DEPUTY SECY SAID THAT, AS IN CASE OF THAILAND, THIS WAS SLOW PROCESS. IT WILL TAKE MANY YEARS TO REACH OPEN RELATIONS, BUT A START HAS BEEN MADE. WE ARE OPTIMISTIC BUT WILL PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY AND PRUDENTLY. ASKED WHETHER CHINA WAS ESTABLISHING CONTACTS WITH U.S. AND JAPAN BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER USSR, DEPUTY SECY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION. HE SAID HE HOPED ALSO THAT PRC WOULD SEE IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO DEVELOP PROPER RELATIONS WITH THAILAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES ON THE PERIMETER OF THE PRC. DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS SUGGESTED THAT CHARTCHAI DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH DR. KISSINGER AND ALSO TALK WITH HIM ABOUT HIS FUTURE PLANS TO VISIT PEKING.

OTHER ITEMS.

14. DURING DISCUSSION OF SITUATION IN INDOCHINA, DEPUTY SECY ASKED PRIME MINISTER WHETHER THERE WAS ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION HE REQUIRED. THANOM RESPONDED THAT HE WAS BRIEFED PERIODICALLY BY U.S. OFFICIALS IN BANGKOK AND, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM THE DEPUTY SECY, SAID THAT EXCHANGE OF INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION WAS FULLY ADEQUATE.

15. DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS ALSO ASKED THANOM WHETHER HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE PRESENT U.S.-THAI COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP EXTENDED FURTHER IN USE OF THAI BASES. THANOM SAID COOPERATION IS ALREADY GOOD. AS PARTICULAR EXAMPLE HE CITED U.S. AND THAI OFFICIALS WORKING TOGETHER REGARDING BASE SECURITY. DAWEE NOTED THAT THAI SECURITY FORCES ARE GIVEN ONLY TWO MONTHS SEVERANCE PAY WHEN THEY ARE TERMINATED AS A RESULT OF U.S. LEAVING THE BASE. SECURITY FORCES WANT SIX MONTHS. DAWEE

NOTED THAT THESE FORCES HAVE SERVED US WELL AND HAVE SAVED U.S. AIRCRAFT FROM ATTACK. AS ADDITIONAL WAY TO SATISFY BASE SECURITY FORCES, DAWEE SUGGESTED THAT WHEN WE LEAVE ONE BASE, WE SHOULD TRY TO TRANSFER SECURITY DETACHMENT TO ANOTHER BASE WHICH U.S. IS STILL UTILIZING. (COMMENT: DAWEE HAS RAISED HANDLING OF BASE SECURITY FORCES WITH US PREVIOUSLY. MACTHAI IS DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL BE FORWARDED TO CINCPAC SOONEST.)

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16. REGARDING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO U.S., CHARTCHAI SAID HE WOULD BE CARRYING A LETTER FROM THANOM TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND HE HOPED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DELIVER IT IN PERSON. AMBASSADOR UNGER SAID WE HAVE PASSED WORD ON THIS TO WASHINGTON AND HOPE THE PRESIDENT WILL BE ABLE TO SEE CHARTCHAI. IN ANY EVENT, WE WERE CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD SEE DR. KISSINGER. CHARTCHAI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION AND SAID HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE GENERAL HAIG WHOM HE HAD KNOWN AT FORT KNOX IN 1948. DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS ENCOURAGED HIM TO DO SO.

17. AS DISCUSSION BROKE UP, PRIME MINISTER ASKED THE DEPUTY SECY TO CONVEY HIS BEST WISHES TO PRESIDENT NIXON AND DR. KISSINGER. THE SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO DO SO. HE ALSO INVITED CHARTCHAI TO CONTACT HIM WHEN HE ARRIVES IN WASHINGTON AND SUGGESTED THE POSSIBILITY OF A SMALL LUNCH WITH SENIOR PENTAGON OFFICIALS. CHARTCHAI ACCEPTED WITH PLEASURE.

18. COMMENT: DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS' STRAIGHTFORWARD COMMENTS ON MAJOR POLICY ISSUES OF INTEREST TO KEY THAI OFFICIALS WERE MOST USEFUL IN REINFORCING WHAT WE HAVE BEEN TELLING THAI ABOUT PROBLEMS ADMINISTRATION FACES, PARTICULARLY IN DEALING WITH CONGRESS ON AID. HIS FRANK DISCUSSION OF PROSPECTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE SHOULD HAVE SALUTARY EFFECT ON PRIME MINISTER AND OTHERS AND WILL STRONGLY SUPPORT POINTS WE HAVE MADE AND ALSO WHAT AMBASSADOR ANAND WAS RECENTLY TOLD IN WASHINGTON BY DEPUTY ASST SECY DOOLIN. WHILE DISCUSSION OF U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND WAS GENERAL IN NATURE, DEPUTY SECY CLEMENTS, WHILE AGREEING THERE WOULD BE FURTHER REDUCTIONS, CLEARLY CONVEYED OUR DESIRE TO MOVE IN DELIBERATE AND ORDERLY MANNER. FOR THEIR PART THAI REITERATED THEIR AWARENESS OF NEED FOR CONTINUED U.S. STRENGTH IN AREA BUT AT SAME TIME THANOM POINTED OUT POLITICAL PROBLEMS HE IS FACING FROM STUDENTS AND OTHERS. DEPUTY SECY

CLEMENTS' EXCELLENT PRESENTATION ON THESE TWO IMPORTANT ISSUES
WILL BE OF GREAT HELP TO US IN FURTHER DEALINGS WITH PRIME
MINISTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES.

19. THIS MESSAGE CLEARED IN DRAFT BY DEPASSTSECY DOOLIN.
SUGGEST DEPARTMENT REPEAT TO RANGOON, PHNOM PENH, SAIGON,
VIENTIANE AND CINCPAC.
UNGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN RELATIONS, MILITARY EQUIPMENT, COMMUNISTS,
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 SEP 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BANGKO14495
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750011-1312, P750011-1308
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730963/abqceflg.tel
Line Count: 281
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 NOV 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14-Nov-2001 by martinml>; APPROVED <27-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SECRETARY CLEMENTS' DISCUSSION WITH THAI PRIME MINISTER
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, MILI, TH
To: STATE
SECDEF
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005